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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

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FEDERAL.

INCREASED IMPORT DUTIES.

In deference to repeated representations by the interested manufacturers the Federal Council has sanctioned an increase in the customs duties for elastic fabrics and speedometers, in the latter case the duty has been trebled.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

The latest return of the Swiss National Bank exhibits further record figures. The gold reserve amounts to 1189.2 million francs whilst the note circulation has dropped to 1209.8 million francs, thus giving the latter a gold cover of 98.28%.

SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS.

In reply to representations from ecclesiastical quarters the railway department shows that no supplementary or extra trains to promote or encourage excursion or party traffic will be run on Good Fridays, Palm Sundays and the Sundays of Easter and Whitsun.

BANKING CONSORTIUM FORMED.

A consortium of the leading Swiss banks has been formed at Geneva with the object of preventing a repetition of the sharp fall in quotations which occurred in the Swiss market last week.

The Swiss market has been considerably upset for some time owing to the heavy withdrawals of funds from the local banks. Hence this movement by the various credit institutions in the country to preserve a united front. The Swiss franc continues firm thanks to the gold cover of over 100 per cent. of the note circulation.

AUTUMN MANOEUVRES IN SWITZERLAND

On the occasion of the Autumn manoeuvres of the 4th and 5th Division the following countries are going to send military missions: Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, United States, Spain, Poland and Argentine. The "Défilé" of the 4th Division will take place on September the 10th.

OUR HOTEL INDUSTRY.

According to official statistics just published for the year 1929 our country possesses 28,247 hotels and similar minor establishments that cater for tourists and those whose despise living in their own "castle." This figures comprises 7,772 hotels and boarding houses, 17,746 restaurants and inns, and 2,729 apartment houses. The total staff employed is given as 120,121 of which 84,075 belong to the fair sex.

AN ANNIVERSARY.

September 2nd is the 125th anniversary of the mountain slide of Goldau, the greatest catastrophe that ever visited our country though its magnitude is overshadowed by more gigantic phenomena of recent times in other parts of the world. On that fatal afternoon five whole villages were buried completely the falling rock and boulder forming a new surface from 20 to 30 metres above the old level; few of the inhabitants escaped with their lives, 477 perishing with their homesteads. Only two of the villages have so far been rebuilt: Goldau and Lowerz.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The rapid development of civil aviation have made it desirable to enlarge and supplement the existing buildings for the reception and storage of aeroplanes. As the cantonal authorities are disinclined to grant the necessary credit a private development company is in course of formation and it is anticipated that the municipalities

of Zurich and Winterthur will co-operate financially.

BERNE.

The hundredth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Liberal Party in the canton of Berne was celebrated at Burgdorf on Sunday last. The attendance at this important gathering amounted to well over 6,000 members. M. Häberlin, President of the Swiss Confederation made a speech in which he pointed out the merits which the liberals have to their credit in the history of the Confederation. National Councillor Schupbach, Central President of the Swiss Liberals also addressed the assembly.

* * *

A concession is being sought from the Federal railway department for the construction of a suspension railway from Grindelwald to the Schreckfeld (Faulhorn group). It is expected that the winter-season in Grindelwald will derive considerable benefit as access to the skying fields in the higher regions will be facilitated.

LUCERNE.

The Bank Sautier A.G. in Lucerne which suspended payments a few months ago, offers its investors a settlement of 40 per cent. In order to diminish the losses, Dr. A. Sautier has placed his whole private fortune at the disposal of the creditors. The liabilities amount to 7,201,000 against 3,224,000 assets.

* * *

The "Schweizerischer Konservativer Parteitag" was held at Lucerne on Sunday last. M. Musy, Federal Councillor, in his oration warned the country of the results of mischievous bolshevistic propaganda.

GLARUS.

Lieut. Col. Peter Tschudi-Freuler died in Schwanden at the age of 78. Until a few years ago he carried on large dye-works established by his ancestors as far back as 1829; he was also identified with the spinning industry and a member of the board of the Credit Suisse and other large financial and industrial undertakings.

BASLE.

The death is reported from Riehen of M. Wullschleger at the age of 70. The deceased was for many years President of the Socialist party and was the first socialist in the canton of Basle who entered the Grand Council, National and State Council. From 1902-1920 M. Wullschleger was a member of the cantonal government, during which time he rendered valuable services both to his native canton and party.

* * *

The epidemic of typhoid fever at Basle is assuming a more serious aspect. During the past 8 days 13 fresh cases have been notified bringing the total to 49. So far only one case has proved fatal.

* * *

A large barn stocked with hay and fodder on the "Bruckgut" near Münchenstein was destroyed by fire last week, it was in this building where in 1891 on the fateful Sunday afternoon 70 dead were laid out for identification when the adjoining railway bridge collapsed with its heavy train load of excursionists.

SOLOTHURN.

The cantonal Government has asked for a credit of 100,000f. to assist the unemployed in the watch industry.

GENEVA.

A new daily paper under the title "Journal des Nations" is being published in Geneva, it deals chiefly with the activities of the League of Nations and other international institutions connected therewith.

AARGAU.

Considered as the most up-to-date institution for deaf and dumb people, the "Landenhof" has been formally opened last week. The cost of the building and installation amounted to frs. 420,000, of which frs. 200,000 have still to be found. About 40 pupils are being instructed at a time.

ST. GALL.

Ten passengers suffered minor injuries at the junction of Lustmühle where two electric local trains collided. The accident is said to be due through the driver of the St. Gall train omitting to wait the passing of the train from Teufen.

A demonstration in favour of the old age pension scheme took place last Sunday at St. Gallen by over one thousand members of the liberal party. M. Schulthess, Federal Councillor addressed the conference, giving a concise outline of the new law, which will shortly come before the electors. He made an eloquent appeal to the delegates for supporting this important undertaking.

THURGAU.

During the last hunting season the canton cleared frs. 245,000 for allowing its territory to be shot over by 538 huntsmen.

GRISONS.

A proposal to open the roads of the village of Sent to motor lorries was originally sanctioned by the electors with a majority of two; however, on the ground of irregularity, a second poll was taken when the proposal was rejected by a majority of 12.

TWO ALPINE SEASONS.

CONTINUED.

After all we never reached the true summit of our objective, the Lochberg, but contented ourselves with one nearly as high and equally meritorious; excusing ourselves, too, with every reason which prudence and nobility could devise not for troubling ourselves further; then we hurried down a broken glen and a flowery valley to Realp and caught a train for Brig. Remarkable indeed was the sight (my first) of the Rhone glacier, the icefall descending to within a short distance of the railway, massed with greeny-blue pinnacles which fall and threaten to fall every moment. From its snout issues the infant Rhone, which follows us down to Brig, at first tumbling and dashing down a rocky bed, growing larger as other streams join it, gliding now through pastures edged by scythed slopes of hay, later hiding in a deep-wooded gorge, and finally sweeping round the corner to Brig with a speed that makes it almost a fearsome thing. From here running down it will find a temporary resting place in the Lac Lemman. But soon it pours its green column through the sluice gates of Geneva, and rides on among the hills of France, majestic at Lyons, swift and irrepressible at Avignon, as it hurries towards its end; until at last near Marseilles it flings wide its arms to the Mediterranean, as a traveller finishing a long journey.

Once more the weather cleared for the grandest of our accomplishments, the crossing of the Lötschen-lücke to Falleralp. A magnificent sunrise lit the Zermatt peaks, the Dom and Täschhorn sailing like a marble castle in a green sea. Before us the Jungfrau and her attendants took the morning, and we moved like intoxicated pygmies up the moraine of the grandest of all glaciers. At 7.10 we halted in the sun for a meal. From here for six hours we were burned by a glaring sun on white snow, soft and yielding. A scare from crevasses proved no more than a scare, but for hours plugging through deep snow with a heavy sack can be purgatory. Actually it was joy, for the scene framed by the snow wall of the Aletschhorn and the rim of Lauterbrunnen peaks is incomparable. At 12.0 we reached the brow of the col, and looked down at the great red wall which ends with the Bietschhorn, now plastered with new snow, and the floor of one of the fairest of Alpine valleys. Down snow we plunged again, off the glacier on to a moraine and the greenest path imaginable, with the water of the Lonza in our ears. Falleralp, perhaps of all Alpine resorts the best, greeted us with welcome, a bath and our luggage. In our pine-timbered bedroom we dreamed of sun-filled hours. From our window we could see the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn with its nightcap of snow, and the stream which danced down from its eiderdown, the Wetterflücke. We feasted off bilberries and cream, and enjoyed uproariously large helpings of each course of the table d'hôte; such are some of the "indefeasible good things of life."

Our last expedition was painted in gloomier colours. Under a leaden sky we started for the Petersgrat at 4.10, and at 5.10 it was snowing. With all the inconsequence of human beings we sat down to discuss prospects, and decided that it was too early to return to bed, but that we could not climb the Tschingelhorn, but merely cross the Petersgrat; a weak resolution it seemed at the time, but the reverse later on. We breakfasted out of the falling flakes under a stone, and pressed upwards in growing mist to the end

of the tiny rock ridge which marks the crossing point. Not until we had crossed did we realise what our project meant. We were in a new world: the violent wind which so far the bulk of the Petersgrat had kept from us, burst in all its force, whirling the snow in our faces, making it difficult to breathe, and almost impossible to see. Our objective, the Muthorn Hut, was normally only half an hour away, and with a wall of rock behind us as a guide we felt safe even if compelled to retreat. There was danger from crevasses, for the mist was so thick it was impossible to see them until one foot was on their brink. After half an hour we were counselling retreat, when we saw a party of thirteen persons coming up from the hut, and after seeking our direction from them, followed their footsteps. Five minutes later the last traces of their steps had disappeared, and merely a smooth snow slope remained where but a few minutes before an army had passed, so violent was the storm. But now we were more confident, and in a few moments through a sudden break in the mist we caught sight of the hut not 100 yards away. Ten minutes later we were inside, welcomed by a Swiss party, and for an hour and a half ate and drank our ample provisions. Our troubles, however, were not yet over; for we had still to descend the Tschingel Glacier. I make a claim to unusual wisdom in prolonging our eating and drinking until the mists cleared a little and gave us a fine run down the broad, snow-covered centre where a mist would have been decidedly unpleasant. Actually it caught us lower down among crevasses, and it was of the pea-soup variety. Not only was it impossible to see any further away than two yards, but in the complete whiteness of snow and greyness of atmosphere it was impossible for the leader to tell where his next step would land him. The eye has nothing on which to focus. I now tried an experiment I had heard of, rolling a small snowball and throwing it as a mark in front. This, though a slow method of procedure, was helpful, and we soon arrived among rocks where normal eyesight returned again. Down we plunged, cut off from the rear, and with only a slender knowledge of the right way off the glacier beyond a general direction. Once an enormous wall loomed up in front, beneath which we correctly passed; and once a towering and totally unknown icepeak grew out of the mist; it proved to be a serac of no great height. At last we reached the moraine, under the mist caught sight of the path, and hurriedly flung ourselves upon it, safe after an anxious hour. So the mountains had reminded us just at the end that their majesty, even their attraction, lies not only in calm and sunlit loveliness, but in the anger of storm and mists. Musing over the circumstances of this, our last expedition, we descended the green ledges of the valley to Lauterbrunnen.

H. C. A. Gaunt.

In Contemporary Review, July 1931.

SWISS SURPRISES.

CURIOSITIES IN HISTORY.

History has its vagaries as well as nature, and on the screen of one little country we shall focus some events which to-day seem almost fantastic. Switzerland is full of surprises, both in scenery and in story. That is what gives it attraction for the tourist and interest for the historian. What it hides round the corner lures one on. If the views of the unexpected from its heights evoke wonder, not less do the marvels in its annals.

Its centrality compensates for its smallness. With Europe as a circumference, the pressure from so many different points has given odd twists to its history. Scotland and Switzerland have much in common, as we shall see. They are like in this, that if they were spread out their size would no longer be a reproach. Both, however, prefer altitude to latitude, and this applies to character as well! Yet this was not always the case. There was one exception, and we shall begin with this strange tragedy, which was not without its grim humour.

Tired of the Mountains.

To the modern tourist it seems astonishing that people could ever grow tired of these snow-capped peaks. Yet one can have too much even of a good thing. It was in the days long before winter sports were thought of, when icy slopes had not become gold mines for their owners; and it all came about through a Swiss tourist of that time. His name was Helicon, and he lived up to its first syllable in unconsciously preparing the abyss into which he unwittingly plunged his whole race. He took a pilgrimage to Rome before such pilgrimages were fashionable. It would be about the year 115 B.C. He came back with traveller's tales. He told the Helvetii what they were missing, and that is a sure way to create discontent. The mountains lost their glamour, and their inhabitants grew restless. The heaven worked. Curiosity to see what was beyond their icy barriers grew apace. The Swiss, to whom tourists were in later times to bring fortune, experienced misfortune by becoming tourists themselves.

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They set out on their sight-seeing *en masse*, and in their first enthusiasm swept Lucius Cassius and his Roman legions out of their way. It was a different matter when they encountered the Consul Marius at Aix. The remnant which escaped went home to their mountains chastened, but not cured. Nearly fifty years passed, and the fever for travel broke out again. This time they made deliberate preparations. For several years they stored up corn, and manufactured weapons. Transport waggons were built and cattle collected. Then when all was ready they said good-bye to their snowy summits, and burned their homes so that they might not be tempted to return, and, taking their wives and children with them, started out into the world, four hundred thousand strong.

The moment was inopportune; for another Dictator had arisen greater even than Marius, Julius Cæsar. He had no patience with discontented people; besides, the Helvetii acted as a buffer state between the Roman Republic and the fierce tribes of the North. He made one of his most rapid marches, built a bridge over the Aar in a day, and headed them off, and taught them in his severest manner the lesson of contentment. Little more than a quarter of their numbers survived that lesson, and marched back to rebuild their homes and settle down amongst their mountains, cured. Henceforth if they could not go out into the world they would bring the world to them, which they are doing to-day.

The Scots Shape Switzerland.

We are not surprised at the Scots turning up anywhere. They are more restless than the Swiss, and have not been taught the lesson of contentment! What we are apt in our modesty to forget is what Europe owes us. We remember with gratitude what Switzerland did for us in the days of the Reformation, when it sheltered our exiles. But after all that was but a pay-back. As long ago as the sixth century we reached out a helping hand to our brethren of the mountains. In 590 A.D. the restless Scot left the North of Ireland and the Western Islands to reform Europe. The success of these Culdee missionaries was only equalled by their daring. They entered Switzerland about 610 A.D., and proceeded in their rough and ready way to put things right. They smashed the idols of Odin and burned his temples, and calmly faced the fury of the enraged pagans. They suffered, but stuck to their task; and the result was a new Switzerland. Saint Gallus has left his shadow in the Abbey of St. Gallen. They did more than Christianise—they stamped their freedom-loving character on the religious communities they founded. These fostered that spirit in later years, and bred that love of liberty which inspired the Swiss in their heroic struggle against tyranny. Bannockburn had its reflection in Morgarten. There was more than coincidence of date between these two battles. It was the spirit of the old Culdees bearing fruit on Swiss and Scottish soil.

Pioneers of Peace.

History repeats itself. It is not only to-day that Switzerland has become the home of the peace movement. Geneva is merely following Lausanne, and that is an old story. The League of Nations, and the Conference for Disarmament, are the up-to-date methods for reaching the goal which was almost attained nine hundred years ago. The Swiss then introduced the thin edge of the wedge—though to tell the truth it was fairly broad—and if only they could have driven it home war would have been a thing of the past. I am not sure but that they were on the right lines. Their plan only required a little extension, and they would have been able to beat the sword into the plowshare. In 1036 A.D. Hughes, Bishop of Lausanne, convoked a Synod of Bishops, and issued an edict forbidding, under penalty of excommunication, all acts of war between Wednesday evening and the following Monday morning. If only he could have included Tuesday the trick was done. To such a noble effort it is a pity that the third day in the week proved an obstacle. Mars managed still to keep his foot in, and so prevent the door being slammed in his face. I hope that when the nine hundredth anniversary of that attempt takes place the world will honour Switzerland for its lead. Hughes may have got his ideas from the Arabs, who have close periods for the slaughter of men, and have set apart four months in which war is forbidden. All we have got to do now is to revive that old ban, make it universal, and include Tuesday!

The Clouds Lift.

The mountains which used to be a terror have now become an asset; they have transformed fear into fortune. As late as 1387 six bold men were sentenced in Lucerne to years of imprisonment for having ventured to climb Mount Pilatus; for by this act they were supposed to have disturbed the spirit of Pontius Pilate, which, after roaming restlessly over sea and land, had found a home in the depths of the lake on the mountain. It was considered of the utmost importance that such an evil ghost should not be roused from its slumbers; and no wonder the good citizens of Lucerne shuddered when they heard of the trespass of their townsmen. With Pilate starting again on his roamings, who would be safe? To-day, when I see a giddy party of tourists starting with laughter and jokes to ascend that peak, I tremble at the fate which might befall them if the Burgomaster of Lucerne in 1387 could but lay his hands upon them! It was only when the Continent was reopened after the battle of Waterloo that the mountains of Switzerland came into their own. To-day the sons of the ancient Helvetii have no cause to seek an El Dorado outside the confines of their own country. Their despised birth-right has brought them gold from the ends of the earth.

The Scotsman.

Rev. A. G. Mackinnon, D.D.

EIN- UND AUSFUHR VON SCHUHWAREN DER SCHWEIZ IM ERSTEN HALBJAHR 1931.

(Korr.) Die Einfuhr von Schuhwaren nach dem mit eigenen Schuhfabriken reichlich versorgten Schweiz. Wirtschaftsgebiet ist im ersten Halbjahr 1931 trotz der stark verminderten Aufnahmefähigkeit des Marktes nur um rund 50.000 Paare gegenüber dem ersten Halbjahr 1930 zurückgegangen, während gegenüber dem ersten Halbjahr 1929 eine Mehreinfuhr von über 250.000 Paaren vorliegt.

Die Totaleinfuhr beträgt:		
1. Halbjahr	Paare	Wert in Fr.
1929	1.290.179	10.391.832
1930	1.614.214	13.138.470
1931	1.557.382	11.610.943

Bei diesen Zahlen sind Kautschukschuhe (Ueberschuhe), wie sie in der Schweiz nicht hergestellt werden, mit in die Berechnung gezogen, da nach der vorliegenden Nomenklatur des schweizerischen Zolltariffes eine reinliche Ausscheidung dieser Warengattung nicht möglich ist. Der kleine Rückgang in der Einfuhr ist auf die verminderte Einfuhr aus Frankreich zurückzuführen, während die Einfuhrmengen aus Deutschland und der Tschechoslowakei eine starke Vermehrung aufweisen. Es sind eingeführt worden aus:

1. Halbj.	Deutschland		Tschechoslowakei	
	Paare	Wert in Fr.	Paare	Wert in Fr.
1929	429.565	4.744.109	123.215	1.639.830
1930	679.153	6.835.103	158.669	2.217.850
1931	683.877	5.087.008	325.129	3.898.153

Die Ausfuhr konnte sich auf der vorjährigen Höhe halten und ist sogar unter die Zahlen von 1929 zurückgefallen.

Die Totalausfuhr beträgt:		
1. Halbjahr	Paare	Wert in Fr.
1929	972.599	18.183.460
1930	1.062.064	19.452.859
1931	941.519	15.739.996

Während die Ausfuhr nach England und Frankreich in einem kleinen Umfange gesteigert werden konnte, ist die Ausfuhr nach den übrigen Ländern infolge der verminderten Kaufkraft dieser Märkte und der erhöhten Zollschranken zurückgegangen. Einen besonders starken Rückgang (von 150.000 auf 80.000 Paar) erzeugt die Ausfuhr nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika. Dieser Ausfall ist auf den im Juni 1930 eingeführten Schulzoll von 20 Prozent zurückzuführen, der einigermaßen dadurch kompensiert wird, dass im Herbst 1930 die Firma Bally in den U.S.A. einen eigenen Betrieb übernommen hat, der inskünftig auch als Stütze für den schweizerischen Import in die U.S.A. von Wert sein dürfte.